

ARKANSAS RISING FAQ

WHY DID ARKANSAS UNITED AND REAL ARKANSAS DECIDE TO PARTNER?

The soccer landscape in Arkansas is complex and constantly changing. The partnership of these proud clubs will form the strongest youth soccer organization in Arkansas and will set the standard for individual player development. By pooling our resources, Arkansas Rising will be able to provide players an unrivaled experience while minimizing geographic challenges for the majority of our youth athletes and maintaining strong community ties. Our combined facilities, coaching staff, and administrative resources will uniquely position Arkansas Rising to provide opportunities for our players and increase the overall level of play. Quite simply we are stronger together.

IS THIS ONE CLUB ABSORBING THE OTHER OR IS THIS CONSIDERED AN EQUAL PARTNERSHIP?

This is a partnership that is being integrated with the highest level of cooperation and support from both Real Arkansas and Arkansas United SC. Coaching staff from both clubs' competitive teams will be integrated, players intermingled, and there will be a clear focus on how to best deliver the optimal experience for the players. Players from both Maumelle Soccer and AR United recreational and academy programs will be encouraged to grow into Rising players. We intend to be the model organization for competitive youth soccer with an unwavering focus on ensuring that the good of the players and their families come first.

WHAT IS THE MEANING BEHIND THE ARKANSAS RISING NAME?

The name Arkansas Rising reflects the journey of like-minded clubs, families, and players coming together to elevate competitive soccer in Arkansas. Our boards agreed the best long-term future for our individual clubs was to partner as a single competitive club, working together to combine resources and maximize our geographical advantages. The clubs have come together to form Arkansas Rising SC are proud, long-existing organizations within their communities. We believe that the name 'Rising' encompasses everything that we, as a club are trying to achieve. Arkansas Rising will constantly strive to increase the level of competition in the state of Arkansas and beyond.

WHAT IS THE MISSION OF ARKANSAS RISING?

Arkansas Rising will develop top quality soccer players, but more importantly, strong, confident young people that desire to pursue excellence. To achieve this Arkansas Rising will implement a progressive player development curriculum to guide players throughout their soccer journey.

WHAT IS THE VISION FOR ARKANSAS RISING?

Arkansas Rising will be the premier competitive soccer club in the region. We will strive to create a culture of excellence that will develop and prepare our players to reach their full potential on and off the field.

HOW DOES MY PLAYER BENEFIT FROM THIS PARTNERSHIP?

This partnership affords players from both clubs to have greater access to better development and programming options than if the two clubs would remain independent on their own.

The partnership also provides greater resources to take coach education and staff development to higher levels, thus giving players a better playing experience. We firmly believe that BETTER COACHES = BETTER PLAYERS. Arkansas Rising will have the best staff in place to guide our kids by providing additional and new training opportunities to our coaches.

There will be some valuable administrative and organizational efficiency that results from combining the two organizations, which will allow us to reinvest back into the player experience.

Arkansas Rising will now have more opportunities to undertake strategic projects in the future ranging from the development of playing facilities and complexes, to provide greater access to the game for our players.

This new unified organization will foster more growth than that of a divided soccer environment. Quite simply, we are stronger together. We are very confident that the initial forming stages will be very short as we all begin to experience numerous advantages.

HOW DO YOU EXPECT TEAMS / COACHES TO INTEGRATE?

Both clubs in the past have been very passionate about providing the best development opportunities available to their players. We recognize that in order for our players to achieve the optimum soccer experience and to compete more strongly at a regional and national level, we should combine resources. Our leadership is experienced, and the staff is professional. We anticipate an easy integration of players and teams with the understanding that the players love to compete, learn together, and experience success. Each team and each player will go through the same process, regardless of club history.

HOW WILL THE CURRENT BOARD OF DIRECTORS BE AFFECTED?

The Board of Directors will remain intact for both Maumelle and United. Arkansas Rising will be led by a new separate committee with representatives from both United and Maumelle. Responsibilities will include creating policies and strategic objectives for the competitive

program, supporting the leadership, approving budgets, securing funds, and ensuring overall club performance.

WHAT IS THE EXPECTED TIMELINE FOR INTEGRATION?

The integration planning started months ago with conversations about how the clubs could provide more and better opportunities to players and to grow competitive soccer in our state. Board members and leadership from Maumelle and United have worked to build this long term partnership come to fruition. The board of directors for both clubs have agreed that joining together as Arkansas Rising is in the best interest of our youth players and that our players will benefit in the short, medium, and long term with the agreement being set for a minimum of six years.

As soon as the State Health department clears us to return to practice, we will host combined training sessions for all players. These sessions will take place over a three week period and will allow time for the players to regain fitness after sheltering at home and give coaching staff time to evaluate players for team placement prior to our Arkansas Rising player placement event.

WHAT DO THE LEADERSHIP ROLES LOOK LIKE FOR THIS NEW ORGANIZATION?

Arkansas Rising will consist of leadership from both Maumelle and United directors and staff. We are very fortunate that both clubs have leadership that will bring tremendous expertise and experience to provide direction to all our coaches for the benefit of our players.

Brittany Axford - Technical Director

Alex Burgess - Girls Director of Coaching

David Garcia-Hevia - Boys Director of Coaching

WHAT WILL THE COACHING STAFF LOOK LIKE?

The current United and Real coaching staff will become part of the Arkansas Rising coaching staff. The leadership team is currently working to appropriately place all staff members in this unified organization.

WHAT IS THE TRAINING CURRICULUM/PLAYING STYLE? WHO WILL CREATE IT?

The club's curriculum will define in detail the Arkansas Rising style of play, laying out the methodology for coaches and players as they grow through different stages for the long term development for the players. The clubs have had a similar style of play and similar objectives for the long term development of the players, so combining to take best advantage of the strengths of each should be a natural transition for coaches and players. The leadership team will design and oversee the implementation of the curriculum.

HOW MIGHT THIS AFFECT MY COMPETITIVE TEAM AND/OR COACH?

The goal will be to form teams with players who have similar abilities and level of play. Tryouts or Player Placement events will ultimately determine a team's make up from year to year. There now will be more players and coaches in a combined club that will give both more options and selection. This could mean, as tryouts or player placement events always do, some changes

from team to team and coach to coach. The coaching staff will also be evaluated and aligned by the staff leadership to best match experience, credentials, and strengths.

WILL COACHES STAY WITH THEIR EXISTING TEAMS?

Some coaches will stay in their current age group. But, we expect some teams within that age group to change their personnel such that a coach may not have exactly the same players as last year.

WHEN WILL COACHING ASSIGNMENTS BE ANNOUNCED?

We are planning to practice together for at least 3 weeks before teams are formed. At the end of the second week of training, all coaching assignments will be announced.

HOW WILL THE TRYOUT PROCESS WORK?

A new format for tryouts is being established this year: Arkansas Rising placement events. We recognize that all of the players already playing within their respective clubs have been evaluated during training and games throughout the year and therefore should need little additional evaluation during the 'tryout' period. All players from both Real and United need to try out together to build the best-combined teams and certainly, new players will need to be evaluated alongside the existing player pool. So, in essence, we have a placement event for combining the current club players and a tryout event for new players to the program happening synchronously.

We encourage all new players to contact the leadership ASAP as we recommend they join practices before the player placement event. Due to COVID-19, as of May 18, 2020, all players in the state of Arkansas are welcome to practice with Arkansas Rising, regardless of previous club or team commitments.

HOW WILL TEAMS BE SELECTED? CAN PLAYERS PLAY UP?

When we are allowed to go back to practices by the health department, we will host combined training sessions for all players. Players will participate as a single group and will be evaluated together for team placement in the new club. Arkansas Rising will strive to place each player in the best possible environment for his or her individual development.

WHY IS THIS THE BEST THING FOR ALL PLAYERS, REGARDLESS OF TEAM PLACEMENT?

The purpose of Arkansas Rising is about players playing at the appropriate level to enhance their individual player development instead of just forming teams. We believe that the overall level of training will improve, therefore creating a more challenging playing environment for each player, regardless of their placement. Research shows that when a player is placed at the appropriate level, their opportunity for growth will 'rise'. This partnership expands our talent pool and the depth created will lead to a more accurate player placement thus allowing more room for individual players to grow from within the club.

WHAT ARE THE EXPECTATIONS REGARDING TRAINING, GAMES, TOURNAMENT, AND TRAVEL?

Expectations for players and families with regard to practices, games, and tournaments will not change. We expect all Arkansas Rising players to display the level of commitment and dedication that is required to play competitive soccer. The Arkansas Rising organization will work diligently to place all players in the best environment possible.

WHERE WILL THE PRACTICE SESSIONS TAKE PLACE? CAN MY PLAYER SELECT THE PRACTICE LOCATION?

Many factors such as player location, age group, and coaching assignments will be taken into consideration when determining each team's practice schedule. Our goal is to make it as easy as possible for all Rising families. Arkansas Rising leadership will determine the practice schedule. Players will NOT be given the choice of where they practice.

WHICH LEAGUE WILL WE PARTICIPATE IN? WILL WE CONTINUE TO PLAY IN OUR CURRENT LEAGUES?

With the ever-changing landscape in Arkansas, the AR Rising leadership will evaluate all available options (NPL, APL, RPL, ACSL, etc.). Rest assured, our goal is to select the most appropriate league that will adequately challenge each team and player without ignoring the logistical challenges for our families.

WHAT IS THE REALISTIC CHANCE THIS PARTNERSHIP WILL RESULT IN AN ECNL OR ANOTHER ELITE LEAGUE BID?

We believe that Central Arkansas has the ability to consistently field teams that can compete on a regional and national level. Arkansas Rising aims to assemble and integrate the talent in Arkansas. Our goal is to provide a single place in which players can train, develop together, and compete at the highest level possible. Based on our location and resources this partnership could create, we feel very good about a bid in the near future to an elite league.

WHAT WILL IT COST TO PLAY FOR ARKANSAS RISING?

We will be working to develop a financial structure comparable to ones already in place at Real and United. We have completed our initial phase of projection/counts and fee analysis. Once we are completed with all phases of this process, we will provide families with the fee structure.

HOW WILL FINANCIAL AID BE DETERMINED AT ARKANSAS RISING?

Both Real and United share in the philosophy that a family's lack of financial resources should not keep a child from playing soccer. Rising will have a formal process for families to submit a request for assistance. This measure ensures an equitable distribution of financial assistance each year and will continue to be implemented in this new partnership.

WHAT ABOUT UNIFORMS AND HOW MUCH WILL THE UNIFORMS COST?

United is currently in the middle of a uniform cycle while Real would have been starting a new uniform cycle this season. As a result of this new partnership, current United families will only need to purchase new jerseys (keeping the same socks and shorts) and Real families will purchase the entire new kits. The uniform cycle will be adjusted and all families will get two more years out of the new Arkansas Rising uniforms.

We are working collaboratively with our uniform vendor to provide the best cost possible for the new kits.

WILL WE CONTINUE TO MAINTAIN ALL OF OUR EXISTING FIELDS?

Part of being a top club in the region is having the best facilities; both Maumelle and United will continue maintenance on all existing facilities.

HOW WILL THE PARTNERSHIP IMPACT THE RECREATIONAL PROGRAM?

The recreational programs will remain geographically based and remain separate for United and Maumelle. Players from both Maumelle and United recreational and academy programs will be encouraged to grow into Arkansas Rising players. Every year we strive to improve and provide our players, regardless of their level of play, with the most innovative and comprehensive programming.

WHAT CHANGES WILL BE IMPLEMENTED IN THE YOUTH ACADEMY PROGRAMS?

The Academy programs will still be run through both Arkansas United and MSC/Real Arkansas, as has traditionally been the case. Both precompetitive Academy programs will provide a direct path to the competitive Arkansas Rising organization. Teams will now have the opportunity to compete against each other more often, which allows for a more consistent and controlled level of competition.

Training programs in the Academy programs will be guided by the Arkansas Rising coaching staff, with a focus on common structure, standards, curriculum, skills, and playing style. Both programs will remain at their respective locations with local directors and coaching staff.

WHERE / HOW CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION?

After reviewing the FAQ, those who have additional questions or wish to discuss these answers in more detail are encouraged to attend an upcoming meeting for a question and answer session - look for a general announcement about upcoming sessions via email and/or on either Real or United websites. For questions or for more program specific information please contact -

General Information - Brittany Axford - brittany@arkansasrising.org

Boys Programming - David Garcia-Hevia - david@arkansasrising.org

Girls Programming - Alex Burgess - alex@arkansasrising.org